

WRDA passes the U.S. Senate

We are excited to report that the U.S. Senate passed their version of the Water Resources & Development Act (WRDA) yesterday. The bill (S.728) passed by a voice vote, which means that individual ayes and nays did not have to be tallied.

Several amendments were offered on this bill. Following are the results of the amendments related to Corps reform and the federal hopper dredge fleet:

- Feingold-McCain amendment regarding independent peer review of Corps projects – Passed (54-46). This amendment requires that new projects costing \$40M+ or those that are controversial be reviewed by an outside panel of scientists.
- Inhofe-Bond amendment regarding independent peer reviews – Failed (49-51). This amendment would have provided for a less onerous peer review process for new projects costing \$100M or more.
- McCain amendment to provide for a construction project prioritization report – Failed (19-80). This amendment would have created a Cabinet-level committee to rank new and existing construction projects.
- Inhofe-Bond amendment relating to a fiscal transparency & prioritization report – Failed (43-56). This amendment would have allowed Congress to outline a number ways in which the Corps should evaluate projects, and was a less onerous alternative to the McCain amendment that failed.
- Specter amendment relating to federal hopper dredges – Passed (63-36). This amendment provides for a report on the east coast federal hopper dredge *McFarland*, and retains our language lifting restrictions from the west coast federal hopper dredges *Essayons & Yaquina*.

There were also a number of PNWA supported priorities in the final bill:

- Permanence for Section 214 permit funding authority
- Removal of artificial operating restrictions on the west coast federal hopper dredges *Essayons* and *Yaquina* (see amendment above)
- Lifting of deed restrictions from lands formerly owned by the Corps (Ports of Lewiston ID, Clarkston WA, Whitman Co. WA)
- Increase in Section 107 (navigation enhancements for waterbourne transportation) project ceilings
- Erosion control project for Puget Island and Westport Beach (Wahkiakum County, WA and Clatsop County, OR)

The last WRDA bill was passed in 2000. Typically, it is biennial legislation, and it is now approaching four years overdue. Now that the Senate has passed their bill, the next step will be a bicameral conference committee to resolve difference between this Senate bill, and the House bill that was passed in July 2005. PNWA strongly supports the quick conference and final passage of a WRDA this year, and has joined with other navigation and economic development groups nationwide to encourage Congress to complete work on the bill.

For a full copy of all PNWA supported language in both the House and Senate WRDA bills, or for more information regarding the amendments that were considered yesterday, please feel free to contact me.

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